



CLINTON LUMBER KINGS PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL CLUB
Only Remaining Charter Member of the Midwest League - Since 1956
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December 5, 2019

Honorable Charles Grassley
United States Senate
Hart Senate Office Building
Room 135
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Grassley:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to write to you to express our displeasure in being named as one of the 42 Minor League Baseball (MiLB) teams that Major League Baseball (MLB) feels the need to eliminate after the 2020 season.

Please allow me the opportunity to point out some facts regarding Clinton and this current situation between MiLB and MLB.

Clinton is the oldest and ONLY Charter Member left in the Midwest League – dating back to the start of the MWL in 1956. We are one of a very few Community-Owned baseball franchises left in America. Midwestern cities much larger than Clinton have failed in their efforts to keep and maintain a professional affiliated baseball team in their communities. Cities like Waterloo, Dubuque, Springfield, Kenosha and Madison are prime examples.

Close to 300 former players wearing a CLINTON uniform have made their way to the Major Leagues since the club's inception in 1937 as a farm club for the Brooklyn Dodgers.

The City of Clinton and the LumberKings work together on the many issues facing our facility - a 1937 Works Progress Administration project. The amount of time and expense incurred to keep the facility strong and operable is quite large – but it provides for a beautiful backdrop and setting for our teams that play here. With the Vision Iowa-led renovations that occurred here after the 2005 season – all of the concerns relating to the MLB clubhouse standards were addressed. Our facility was named by *Ballpark Digest* as one of the top five places to go watch a game.

Our Home Clubhouse – and attached Batting Tunnels - are ranked near the top in the league in size and accommodations, and is way above the current Professional Baseball Agreement (PBA) standards set by MLB. In addition – our Visiting Clubhouse is above the standards set by MLB for visiting clubs. Our Field Lighting is also at a much higher level than what would be found at the Class A level of play – our light meter readings are closer to Double-A playing field levels.

The care and maintenance of the entire facility is a joint effort with the ballclub, the City of Clinton, and the Friends of Riverview Stadium – a 501-C-3 organization whose sole purpose is to ensure the longevity of professional baseball here in Clinton. The City of Clinton recently purchased a \$900k pumping station that will be installed prior to the 2020 season that will all but eliminate the flooding issues that Clinton experienced

this past season. Since 2005 - over \$6.5 million dollars has been spent on renovations / improvements / additions to the facility – all for the betterment of MLB players and our fans.

MLB has outlined four (4) 'talking points' in their explanation to eliminate 25% of all of the MiLB teams in this country. They are:

1. So-called "inadequate facilities" – As mentioned above, we have kept the facility up-to-standard according to the current PBA. Just because Clinton does not have a spacious Visiting Clubhouse or one that is modern and new – is absolutely no reason to be on any list for elimination. Not once have we – or any of the other 41 clubs – been given a reason – any reason – by MLB for our inclusion on their so-called 'hit list'. Adequate time to amend/improve and communication towards MiLB clubs – along with FAIR facility standards will be the key in future discussions.
2. Untenable travel due to franchise relocation – Every single Regulated Transaction and/or Control Interest Transfer involving MiLB ownership and/or MiLB club relocation has to be approved by the MLB Commissioner's office – per Major League Rule #53(b). The argument that MiLB teams or leadership caused the travel difficulties that MLB is expressing is unfounded and completely false as they approved every single MiLB club transfer and relocation. They wanted new and improved markets and facilities – wanting to eliminate any 'bad seeds (markets)' that they saw 'unfit' for inclusion.
3. "Poor pay for minor leaguers" – With record profits (\$11B) and the exemptions enjoyed via Congressional action – this is NOT in any way, shape or form MiLB's fault or concern. They simply do not want to part with their money and pay the MiLB players a fair wage. MLB's argument of close to \$600M being spent on MiLB salaries is skewed when you consider that close to \$500M is spent on signing bonuses to their top players. No different than a Valedictorian at a major university being courted by several businesses who offer them incentives to join their corporation. That is NOT to be confused with regular payroll as our players earn \$1.25k per month for the six months that they play here. That is \$7.5k per player and at approximately 30 players – that total is \$225k. Adding in other salaries for coaches and ancillary expenses – the average MLB team in the MWL spends approximately \$300k. Allowing for salary and cost differentials among the levels and leagues – MLB will save approximately \$20M by eliminating 42 MiLB clubs. \$20M will be saved while 42 communities will be decimated because of pure greed and control by MLB.
4. Drafting and signing players who "don't have a realistic opportunity to make it to the majors" – With their mandate of only drafting 20 rounds (or 600 players), MLB is telling the youth of America that they don't stand a chance in making dreams come true. They are eliminating the 'grass roots' of what this game of baseball is all about. MLB Hall-of-Famers Mike Piazza (62nd round - 1988 MLB draft) and John Smoltz (22nd round – 1985 MLB draft) would both be considered not worthy of consideration by MLB's thinking. Add to that – the amount of players who may not have been HOF worthy but still provided enough talent for MLB clubs to have on their team to make them either winning and/or playoff caliber teams. Again – it is a case of MLB not wanting to pay the players because MLB feels as though they are wasting money on those 'less-deserving' players. The economic impact of the 42 cities impacted by MLB's thoughtless plan far outweighs the saving of \$20M for MLB.

I definitely appreciate the opportunity to address these issues with you.

Should you need any further information, please feel free to contact me.

Best wishes –



Ted Tornow
General Manager